



Dal Tokyo

Gary Panter

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Gary Panter began imagining Dal Tokyo, a future Mars that is terraformed by Texan and Japanese workers, as far back as 1972, appropriating a friend's idea about "cultural and temporal collision" (The "Dal" is short for Dallas). Why Texan and Japanese? Panter says, "Because they are trapped in Texas, Texans are self-mythologizing. Because I was trapped in Texas at the time, I needed to believe that the broken tractor out back was a car of the future. Japanese, I'll say, because of the exotic far-awayness of Japan from Texas, and because of the Japanese monster movies and woodblock prints that reached out to me in Texas. Japanese monster movies are part of the fabric of Texas." In 1983, Panter finally got a chance to fully explore this world, and share it with an audience, when the L.A. Reader published the first 63 strips. A few years later, the Japanese reggae magazine Riddim picked up the strip, and Panter continued the saga of Dal Tokyo in monthly installments for over a decade. But none of these conceptual descriptions will prepare the reader for the confounding visual and verbal richness of Dal Tokyo, as Panter's famous "ratty line" collides and colludes with near-Joycean wordplay, veering from more or less intelligible jokes to dizzying non-sequiturs to surreal eruptions that can engulf the entire panel in scribbles. One doesn't read Dal Tokyo; one is absorbed into it and spit out the other side.

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